



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

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TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Donald L. Wolfe
Director of Public Works

KERN COUNTY INITIATIVE TO BAN THE LAND APPLICATION OF BIOSOLIDS

On June 6, 2006, Kern County voters approved a ballot initiative (Measure E) that bans the land application of biosolids in the unincorporated area of Kern County beginning December 7, 2006. Measure E is the latest in a series of efforts to ban the importation and land application of biosolids in Kern County. Kern County residents believe that Southern California "dumps" their biosolids disproportionately in their County and they do not want this practice to continue.

Virtually all biosolids generated in Los Angeles County are exported due to regulatory restrictions and limited availability of suitable farmland within Los Angeles County. Few landfills in Los Angeles County are permitted to accept biosolids for disposal, and those landfills that do accept the material can only receive small quantities. Landfilling biosolids is discouraged because it decreases the solid waste diversion rate of the jurisdiction producing the material. Public agencies have to ship the material to farther destinations, thereby increasing costs to ratepayers for managing this material.

The City of Los Angeles (and portions of the 23 cities it contracts with) will be most impacted. Currently, the City exports 99 percent of its biosolids (700 tons per day) to Kern County for land application. The City has invested \$50 million to land apply biosolids in Kern County, including purchasing farmland and upgrading the Hyperion Treatment Plant to ensure biosolids meet the highest environmental standards. With passage of Measure E, the City's annual costs are anticipated to increase from \$7 million to as much as \$21 million since the immediate alternative is to transport the biosolids for land application in Arizona or Nevada. The City is considering filing an injunction or lawsuit challenging the initiative, and looking to diversify their management practices.

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The County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (which serve nearly all the remaining cities) exports approximately 50 percent of its biosolids (780 tons per day) to Kern County while the rest is exported to diverse markets throughout California. Of the amount exported to Kern County, 85 percent is composted and 15 percent is land applied. Even with the passage of Measure E, the County Sanitation Districts annual costs would remain relatively the same since they can utilize their other existing markets.

If you have any questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Fred Rubin, Assistant Deputy Director, Environmental Programs Division, at (626) 458-3500, Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

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cc: Chief Administrative Office
County Counsel
Executive Office